

## News from Nan

### ANNA'S FAMILY HISTORY

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER, HEINRICH ADOLPH RIEDEL

JULY 13, 2018 | ANNA

July 13 is the birth anniversary of my great-grandfather, Heinrich Adolph (known as “Adolph”) Riedel.



*Heinrich Adolph Riedel*

Born in the German state of Saxony in 1869, Adolph was the descendant of innkeepers, but he became a weaver at an early age. As a young married man he migrated at least once within the region looking for better occupational opportunities.

In the Saxon town of Meerane he heard of a group, known as “Colonia Saxonica” (Saxon Colony) that was planning to migrate to the United States. Adolph and his wife, Marie Augusta (“Augusta”), decided to join the group.

Most of the migrants were relatively young parents of multiple children. The Riedels’ oldest child, Anna, had died as an infant in Germany, but the next four, two girls and two boys, migrated with them. Their older son was Louis Hermann, my grandfather, who was about four years old when they left Germany in 1873.

The Colonia Saxonia group traveled by what was called the “indirect route”: by ship from Hamburg to Hull, by train from Hull to Liverpool, and by steamship from Liverpool to New York. Steamship travel was still relatively new in 1873; that innovation had cut the crossing to 10-14 days, rather than the four weeks the trip had taken by sailing ship on the “direct route” from Bremen.

The Saxon group entered the United States through New York’s Castle Gardens (the forerunner of Ellis Island), and they eventually arrived in Forestville, Michigan, by the *E. B. Ward* from Detroit.

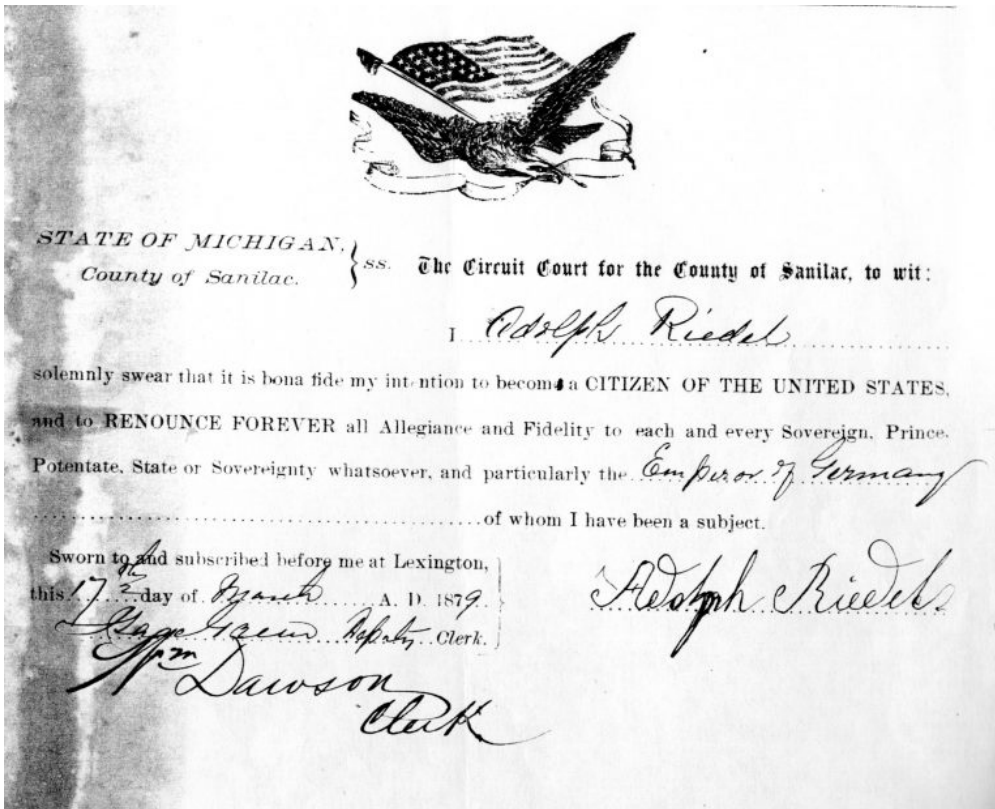
The *E. B. Ward* was named for Eber Ward, a Detroit industrialist who in 1852 had purchased a large tract of land in Forestville, Michigan (about 100 miles north of Detroit), and who was now offering 40-acre parcels to the German migrants for \$7.00 per acre. The land had been burned over in an 1871 fire, but the migrants appreciated not having to cut down so much timber before planting their farms.

Adolph Riedel purchased a parcel, built a log cabin, and established a farm and orchard. Within a few years he had purchased additional land and built a hotel and saloon.



Riedel hotel in the “west end” of Forestville, Michigan

Adolph Riedel’s hotel had a mixed reputation. On the one hand, it was a community center that hosted carnivals, parades, and plays. For example, the village’s first Oktoberfest in 1878 celebrated the fifth anniversary of the group’s arrival and the year when many members became American citizens. (Adolph declared his intention to become a citizen the following year.)



Adolph's citizenship papers

On the other hand, Adolph was fined for selling whisky on the Fourth of July, and there were constant complaints by early-rising farmers who were being kept awake most of the night by drunken drag racing on horseback.

Perhaps to somehow compensate for some of the wilder goings-on in the hotel, Adolph's wife, Augusta, donated land in Forestville for a Lutheran church.

Adolph also started other businesses in Forestville, including a blacksmith shop run by his son-in-law, Emil Zwicker, and a grain elevator, which was later taken over by my grandfather, Louis Riedel.



Heinrich Adolph Riedel and his family in 1890. My grandfather Louis is standing on the right. The children were all born in Germany except the youngest, Arthur.

Happy 176th birthday, great-grandpa Adolph!

◀ 2018 ◀ BIRTHDAY ◀ FORESTVILLE ◀ GERMANY ◀ INNKEEPER ◀ MICHIGAN ◀ MIGRATION ◀ RIEDEL ◀ SAXONY  
◀ WEAVER